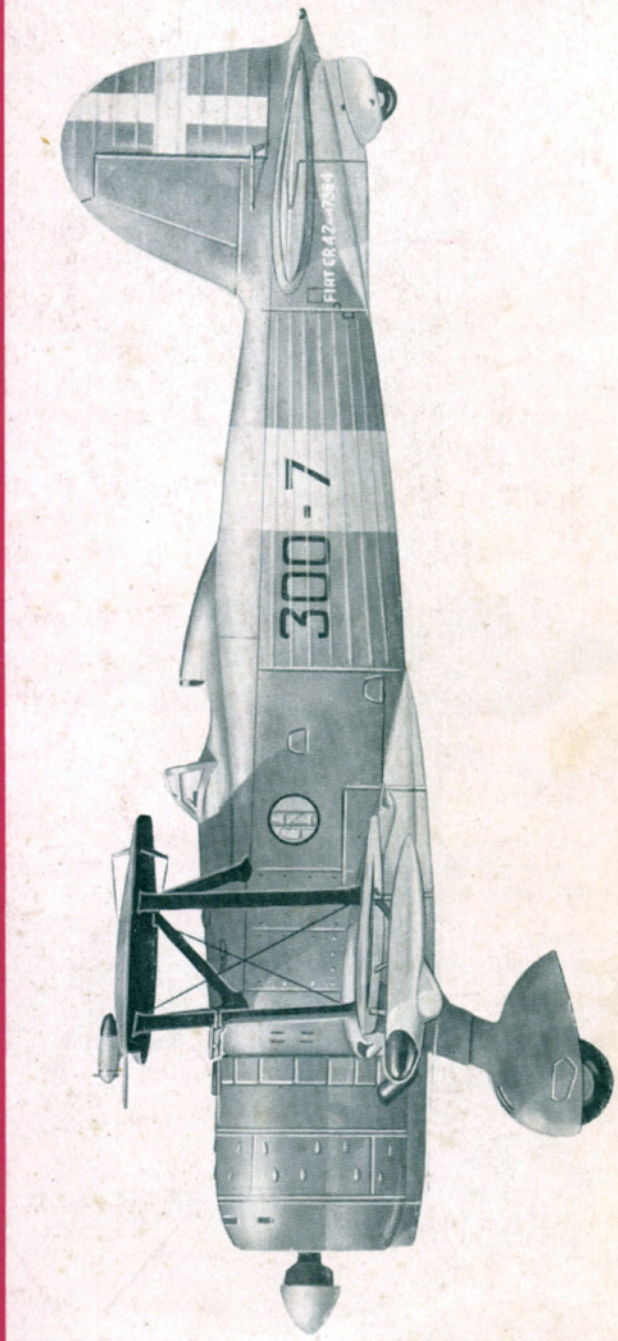
PROFILE
PUBLICATIONS

The Fiat CR.42



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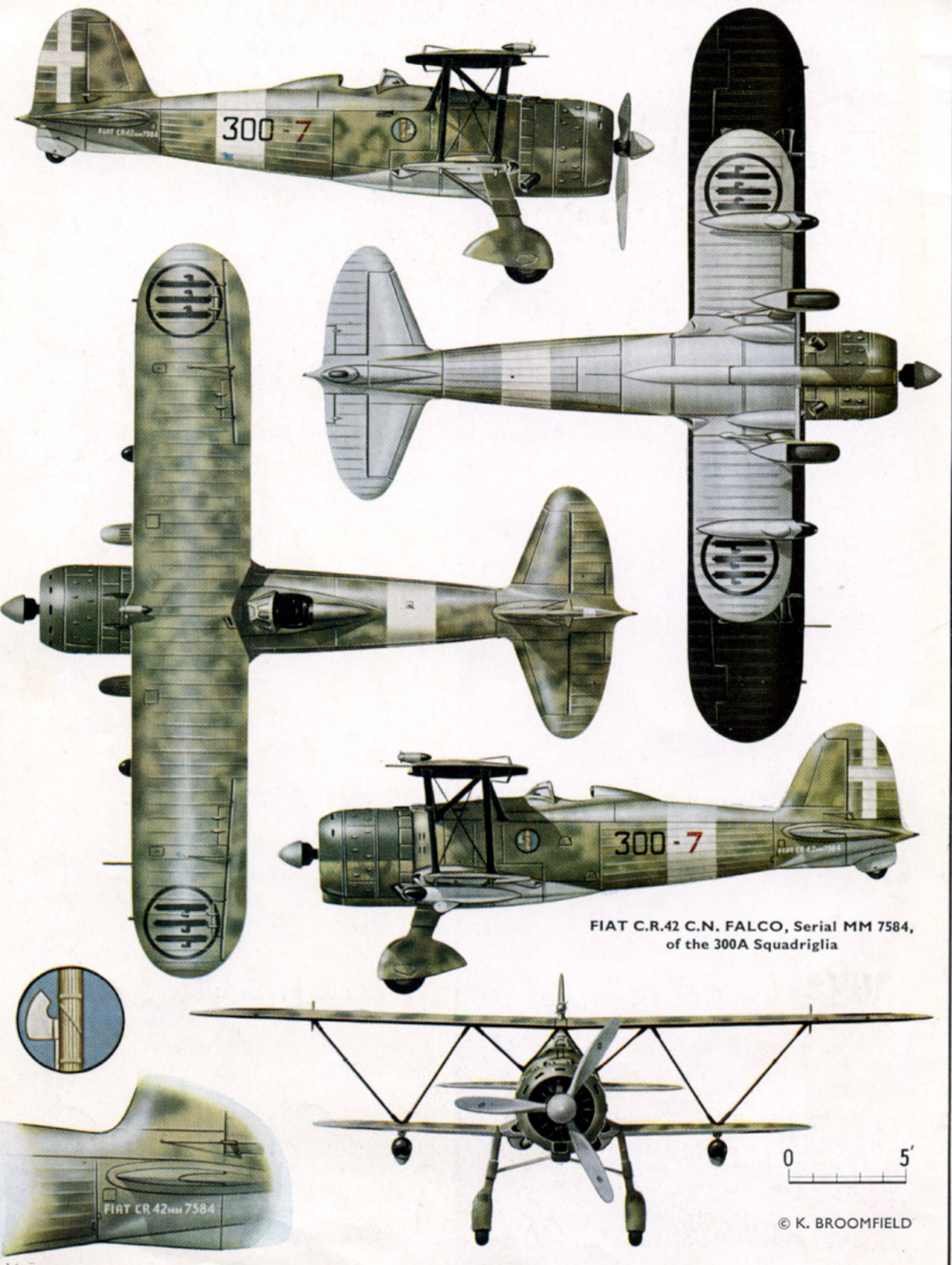


FIAT C.R.42 C.N. FALCO, Serial MM 7584,
of the 300A Squadriglia

The Fiat CR.42

by Gianni Cattaneo

Standard C.R.42 fighters of the 9° GRUPPO, 4° STORMO. Note the horse motif on the fuselage and leg on the fin.

The chair-borne pundit avers that the biplane fighter was obsolescent when pitted against the modern monoplane bomber of the late 1930s, yet it still served with the combatant air forces when World War II began in September 1939. Monoplane interceptors were leaving the production lines in ever increasing numbers, but until they could be integrated into the broad pattern of air power strategy, the second-line biplane was called upon to fill the gap.

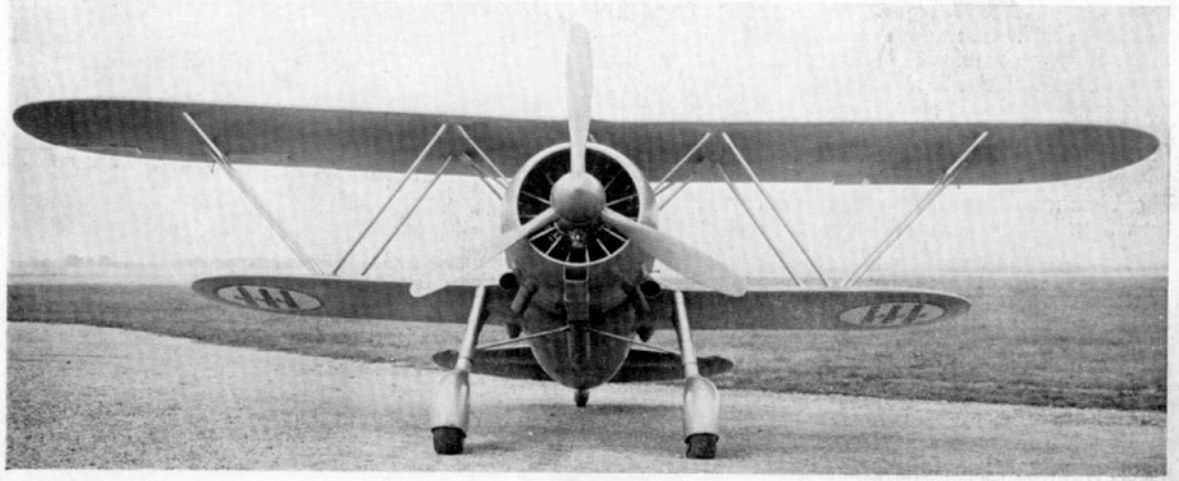
When, in early 1939, the prototype Fiat C.R.42 Falco (Falcon) began its first flights, the days of the biplane formula for fighters were already numbered. But, despite the built-in obsolescence, the new aeroplane was destined to participate in operations in World War II until the closing months of 1943; to fight bitterly on all fronts where the Italian *Regia Aeronautica* was present, and to be built in greater numbers than any fighter of the Italian aircraft industry.

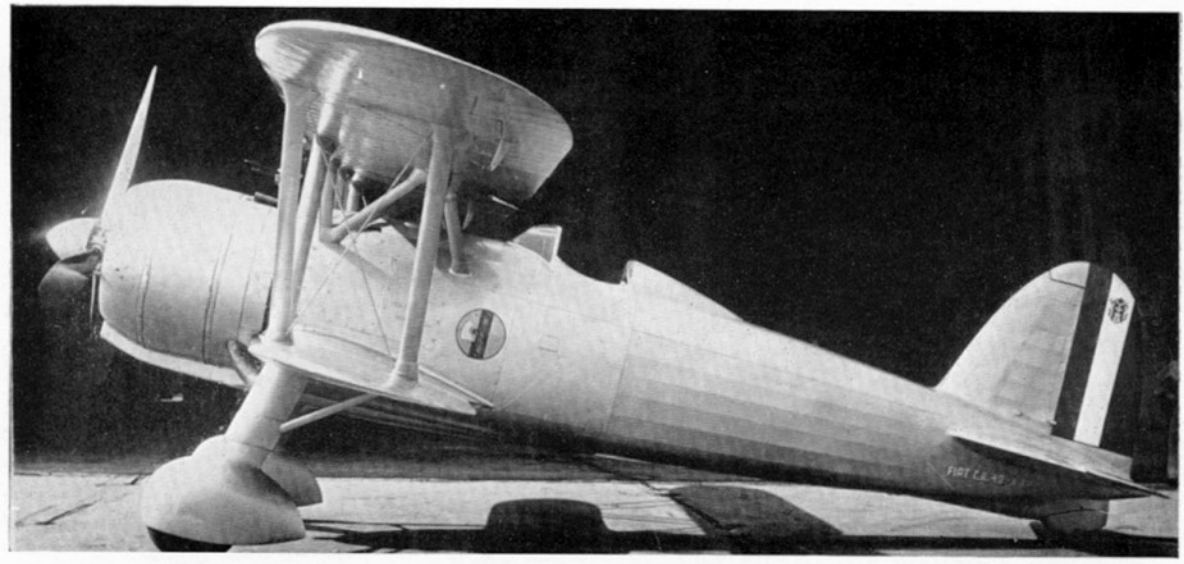
The C.R.42 was an excellent machine in its class and was the last development of a formula dear to Ing. Celestino Rosatelli, Chief Engineer of the Fiat Company. The lineage was born in 1923 with the C.R.20 and 30 series and refined with the next experimental prototype C.R.33, 40 and 41.

The sparkling success gained by the C.R.32 in Spain was one of the main reasons for the persistent confidence of the Ministero dell' Aeronautica in the biplane configuration, with its agile manœuvrability in dog-fighting. And it was only one of the many negative aspects drawn from the victorious conclusion of the Ethiopian and Spanish campaigns.

These two wars, even if they enabled modern military equipment to be tested under genuine

Head-on view of the Falco prototype shows wing bracing and biplane arrangement. (Photo: G. Apostolo)





Early production C.R.42. Metal covered front and fabric covered rear fuselage is evident in this view

operational conditions, gave a completely false impression of Regia Aeronautica efficiency. The demand for, and attrition of, war materials was to some extent lacking, and above all the somewhat unorganised opposition created the illusion that war was easy for the belligerent nations.

In Spain the highly-trained Italian pilots, backed by an efficient ground service and high quality aeroplanes, permitted an ascendency over the opposing pilots, generally poorly-trained mercenaries with little 'esprit de corps'. It was only towards the end of the struggle that the younger, more agressive pilot from the Russian schools appeared. However, no comparison was possible between the events of a civil war with those of the struggle-to-be among the big European powers.

The series production of the C.R.42 was ordered in late 1939, following the initiation of the well-known 'R' plan, that provided for the realisation and production of 3,000 new aircraft such as the monoplane G.50 and MC.200 fighters. Of clean aerodynamic design and an immensely strong structure, the Falco was perhaps the best biplane in service anywhere, and it was well able to give a good account of itself against faster aircraft. Characterised by superlative manœuvrability it combined all the qualities dear to the heart of the Italian pilot.

THE FALCO STRUCTURE

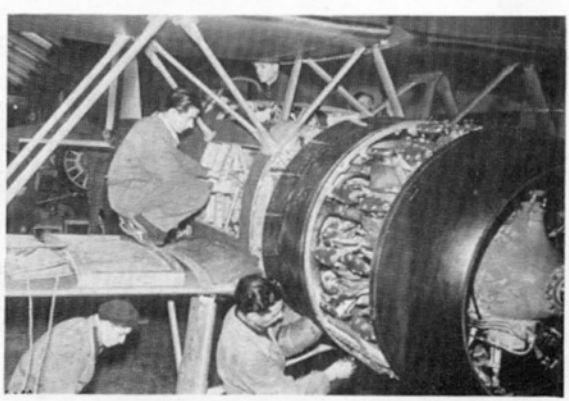
The biplane arrangement was of unequal span, for the two wings were braced by the rigid warren-truss, hall-mark of all the fighters designed by Rosatelli. The fuselage was a welded, steel-tube, triangulated framework of manganese-molybdenum, with light alloy formers, the resultant oval section covered with a metal skin forward and fabric aft of the cockpit. Careful attention was given to the NACA engine cowling fitted with regulable cooling flaps.

Basic structure of the wings was of light alloy and steel, with a metal-skinned leading edge and a fabric main covering. The top wing was in two sections joined at the centre and supported above the fuselage by an inverted 'V' cabane. Lower wings were attached to the bottom fuselage longerons. Ailerons were fitted to the upper wing only. Tail unit was a cantilever monoplane with a duralumin framework covered with fabric. Undercarriage consisted of two independent legs with oleo-pneumatic shock absorbers attached to the upper ends of the lower wing stubs, and braced midway with light tubes to the fuselage centre-line. Legs and wheels were enclosed in streamlined fairings. The tailwheel, retractable on the prototype, was fixed on production aircraft.

Armament was one 7·7 mm. (0·3-in.) and one 12·7 mm. (0·5-in.) S.A.F.A.T. machine gun installed in the upper fuselage decking and firing through the airscrew. A rounds-counter, normal fixture on all Italian fighters, was installed on the instrument panel. The light machine gun was replaced by a second 12·7 in later production machines.

Engine was the reliable Fiat A74R.1C.38 of 840 h.p. driving a constant-speed Fiat 3D41 propeller, and in the engine bay a fire extinguisher was carried. Strangely enough, no radio aids or equipment was fitted.

Power plant installation on the C.R.42.

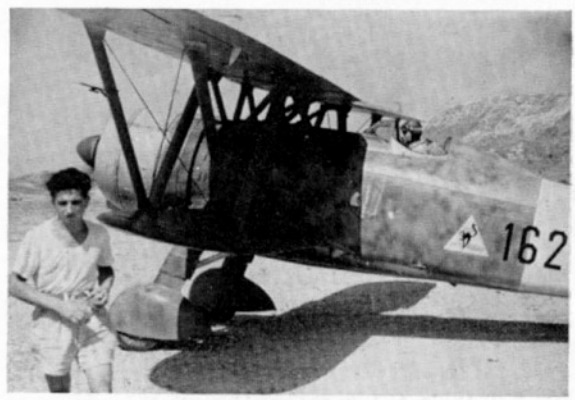


C.R.42s of the 162 Squadriglia over the Aegean Isles in 1940. Below: *a close-up view of the aeroplane in the foreground shows cat motif of the squadron.* (Photos: via G. Cattaneo)

The prototype C.R.42 displayed excellent flight qualities with a maximum level speed of 274 m.p.h. at 20,000 feet, a fast climb and a minimum speed of 80 m.p.h. The robust structure permitted every conceivable manœuvre and the ultimate load co-efficient of the aircraft at 5,060 pounds maximum weight was in fact 14.

INTO SERVICE

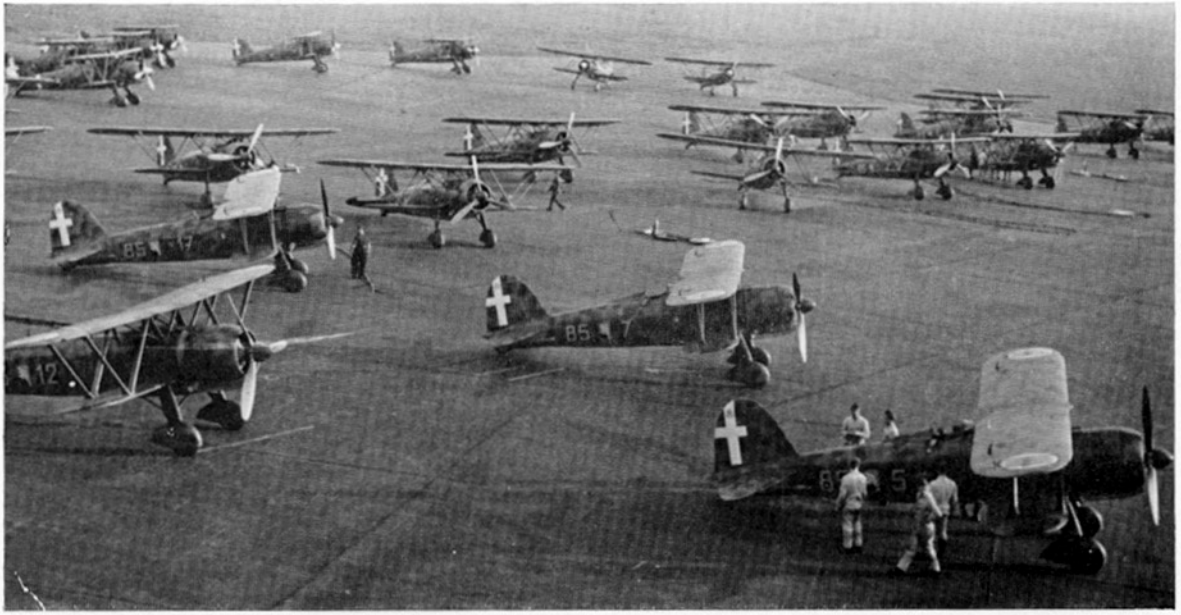
First units to be issued with the new fighter began equipping in 1939, the same year of the prototype's first flight. Simple construction made for easy production, and the familiar biplane configuration enabled the squadrons to work up to front-line efficiency in a short period. At the outbreak of war in September 1919, the C.R.42 equipped three STORMI*. This compared with the five STORMI, equipped with the C.R.32, one STORMO with the G.50 and one with the MC.200.



A total of 143 Falcos, 110 of which were in a state of front-line readiness, were based on the Italian homeland at the time of the entry of Italy into the war on

Falco left behind after the Axis retreat in North Africa. Aircraft is of the same STORMO as those in photograph on page 3. (Photo: Imperial War Museum)

* *The Fighter STORMO was composed of two GRUPPI; every Fighter Group comprised three SQUADRIGLIE, with 12 aircraft to every squadron.*



10th June 1940. The period between September 1939 and 10th June, the so-called "phoney war", was a time of great activity for the Regia Aeronautica. Build-up of squadrons was being activated and while awaiting delivery of the G.50 and M.C.200 a further contract for the Falco was placed in order to continue this expansion. Newer designs in the form of the M.C.202 and Re.2001 were on the drawing boards, but these were in the future and did not go into service until the late summer of 1941 and May 1942 respectively.

At the time of Italy's entry into the war C.R.42 squadron disposition was as follows:— Northern Italy (Nove Ligure and Caselle) 3° and 53° STORMI; Southern Italy (Palermo) 1° STORMO. In the west sector of Libya at Castelbenito was 13° GRUPPO and at Benina in the Eastern Sector was 10° GRUPPO of 4° STORMO. In Africa Orientale Italina (Italian East Africa) were two squadrons, 413 and 414 at Gura and Assab respectively. A grand total of 330 aircraft, 290 of which were available for service, were at a state of readiness, with 40 machines at depots or with the Fiat company.

OPERATIONAL DEBUT

The C.R.42 made its operational debut in the brief, 14-day campaign against Southern France. Two principal actions were carried out by the Italian Fighter Units; the Falcos of the 23° GRUPPO (3° STORMO) and 151° GRUPPO (53° STORMO) attacked the air bases at Fayence and Hyeres on 13th June, and also accompanied the bombing missions by Fiat BR.20s on the harbour of Tolone. Two days later, in fine weather conditions, two complete STORMI (150° and 151° GRUPPI of 53° STORMO), 18° and 23° GRUPPI of 3° STORMO) strafed the air bases of Cuers Pierrefeu and Cannet de Maures. The French Air Force reacted immediately. Against the Luftwaffe in Northern France the Armée de l'Air was a beaten, dispirited force, but the Côte d'Azur and Southern Provence was in the heart of the training area of the French Fighter Arm, and opposition was determined. The C.R.42 faced the Dewoitine D.520 of Groupe de Chasse G.C.III/6 and the Bloch 152 of A.C.3, these fighters being among the best of the mixed French equipment.

Mutual victories and losses were claimed and inflated by both sides, but post-war figures reveal that the victory/loss ratio on both sides was small. On 13th June the C.R.42s destroyed a French fighter in the air, in addition to a number on the ground, without loss to themselves, and on 15th June the Italian machines destroyed eight French fighters (three Blochs and five Dewoitines) for the loss of five Falcos. During the

Upper and two lower views are of C.R.42s of the Corpo Aero Italiano based in Belgium during the Battle of Britain.

Falco of the 95 Squadriglia of the Corpo Aero Italiana showing typical upper surface camouflage.

days that followed the Italian Fighter Units performed escort missions only without opposition until the French capitulation on 24th June. Other C.R.42s of the 1° STORMO based in Sicily escorted SM.79 bombers on raids on a number of Tunisian aerodromes. During strafing runs after the main raid there was no opposition from enemy fighters.

The light losses sustained by the Italian fighters during the French campaign again persuaded the Regia Aeronautica that it was almost unbeatable, and in September 1940 it was decided for prestige and political reasons to send a contingent of the Air Force to collaborate with the Luftwaffe in the Battle of Britain. Thus was born the Corpo Aero Italiano (Italian Air Corp) composed of bomber, fighter and reconnaissance units. The fighters formed the 56° STORMO consisting of 18° GRUPPO (seconded from 3° STORMO) and equipped with 50 C.R.42s; the 20° GRUPPO (from 51° STORMO) with 48 G.50s. They moved to Ursel and Maldegen in Belgium and were accompanied by two STORMI of BR.20s and one squadron of CANT Z.1007Bis.

But all did not go well with the Italian contingent. The weather of Northern Europe was so different from that of the homeland, and the fast Bf 109 fighters of the German 2 Loftflotte found it difficult to keep formation with the slower biplane. The German aircraft, like their British opponents, were equipped with VHF radio and this equipment was lacking in the C.R.42.

However, it was decided to commit the Falco into battle against the Spitfires and Hurricanes and the Italian biplane first crossed the Channel on 11th November 1940 for a raid on Harwich. A second attempt was made on 23rd November when the C.R.42 took part in an offensive sweep against the towns of Margate and Folkestone.

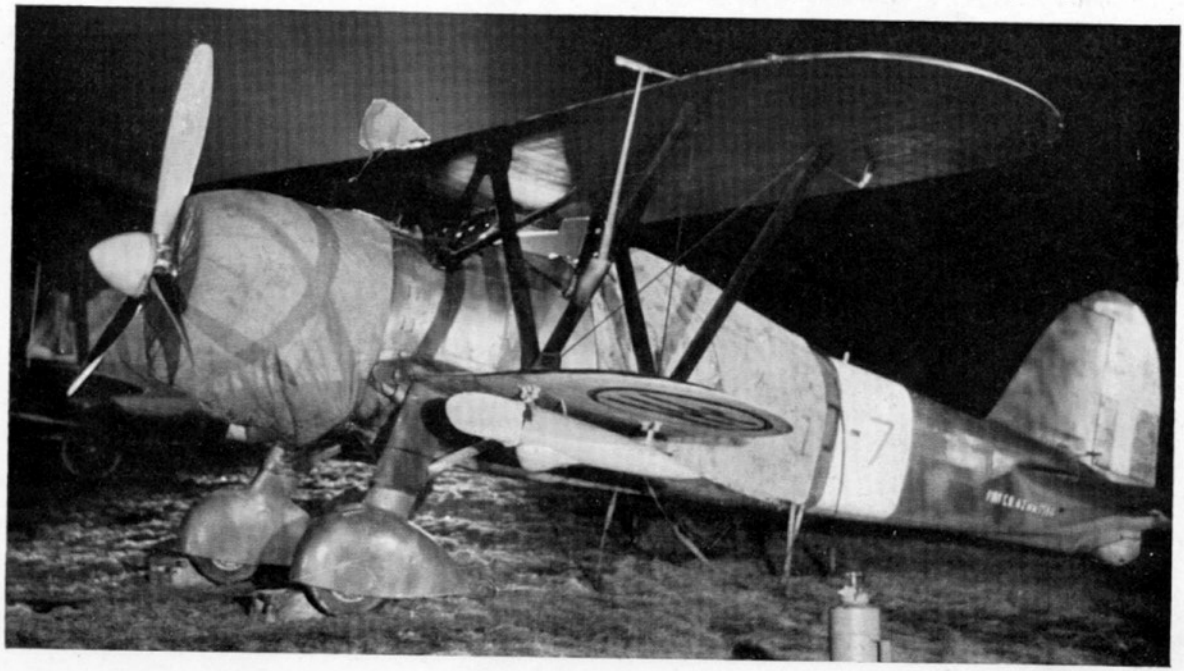
The inevitable victory/loss claims were made by both sides with the Italians claiming nine probables for the first raid at the cost of three aircraft, and five victories and two losses on the second. Royal Air Force records show that these claims were, in fact, inaccurate.

Heavy demand for the Falco in the Mediterranean Theatre, coupled with the obvious deficiencies against the R.A.F. speeded the return of the C.R.42 to Italy in January 1941. Two squadrons, 352 and 353 of 20° GRUPPO were left behind and did not leave Belgium until the following April.

THE MIDDLE EAST ACTIONS

The widest use of the C.R.42 was in North Africa, where it equipped the majority of the Italian Fighter Units during the initial stages of the desert campaigns, but as an interceptor and fighter it was no match for the Hurricanes and Tomahawks that appeared later, and it was relegated to the ground attack rôle. In Libya it served with the famous 10° GRUPPO, consisting of 84, 90 and 91 squadrons, of 4° STORMO

Night fighter version of the Falco was the C.R.42 CN (Caccia Noturna). Aircraft belongs to the 300A Squadriglia.



C.R.42 of the 1/4 Fighter Squadron, Hungarian Air Force. (Photo: via G. Cattaneo)

and 9° GRUPPO, 73, 96 and 87 Squadrons of the same STORMO.

The Falco was particularly active during the first cycle of operations which lasted from June 1940 to February 1941, and it was in the forefront of the Italian offensive which culminated in the conquest of Sidi Barrani. It went over to the defensive when the British counter-offensive swept the Italian Forces out of Cyrenaica. This campaign is significant for it was the first time that the fighter and fighter-bomber took a major part in a land battle, and it set the pattern for all future desert fighting.

Until December 1940 the C.R.42s of 4° STORMO, with the C.R.32s of 151° GRUPPO (53° STORMO) had to contend only with the Gloster Gladiator biplane and the Italian aircraft displayed a marked advantage over the British machine. But when the Hurricanes began to appear it was the C.R.42 that was the inferior aircraft.

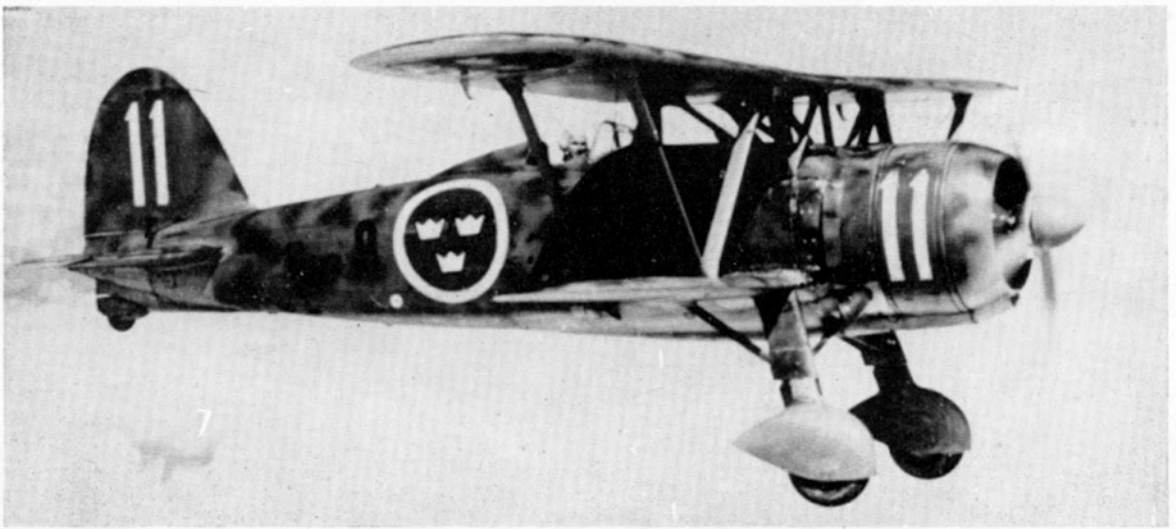
By January 1941 many of the new units serving in Africa were equipped with the G.50, but demand for the Falco was still insatiable and as a consequence 18° GRUPPO with its C.R.42s were transported from Belgium to the Middle East. From June 1940 until February 1941 Italian Fighter Units equipped with the Falco flew a total of 11,286 hours on offensive sorties. An average of 36 aircraft per day was engaged—157 victories and 41 losses was the price paid for this activity. During this time also Falcos of 17° GRUPPO, 157° and 23° GRUPPI based in Sicily took part in the first air strikes against Malta, and acted as escorts to the bombers and torpedo aircraft attacking Allied convoys in the Mediterranean.

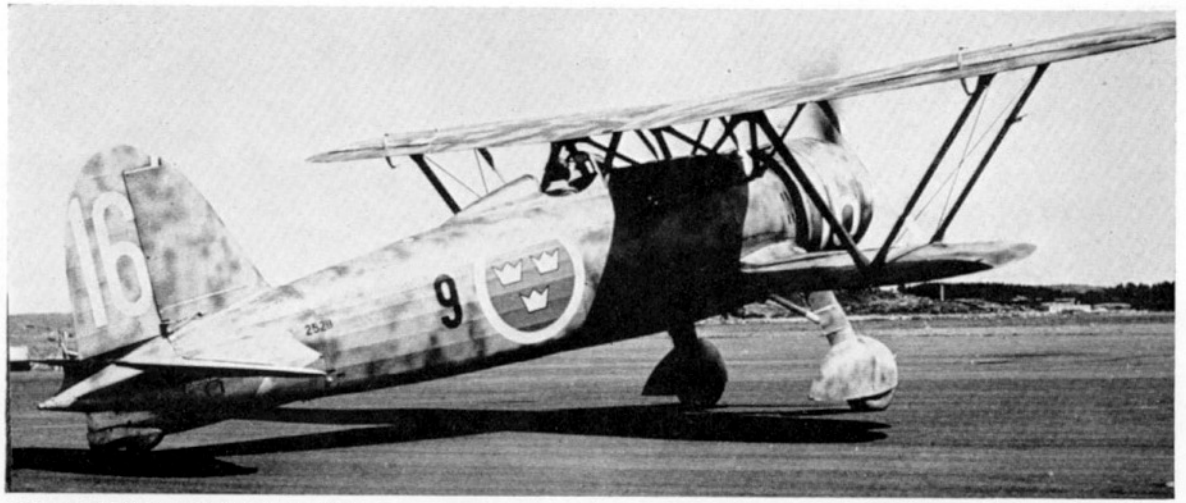
THE GREEK CAMPAIGN

At the end of October 1940, when the war against Greece began, Italian fighter units consisted of one GRUPPO of C.R.32s, two GRUPPI (24° and 154°) of G.50s and one GRUPPO (363,346 and 365 squadrons) with the C.R.42. The Greek fighter force composed 44 aircraft: 30 PZL P.XXLVs, two Gloster Gladiators, 7 Avia B.534s and five Bloch 151s, a curious mixture which was soon reinforced by British aircraft.

In the air fighting that followed, the Italian pilots displayed a marked superiority over Greek pilots who struggled bravely, but were soon defeated. And,

A J.11 (C.R.42) of the F9 Wing, 1st Air Division, Swedish Air Force. (Photo: Bo Widfeldt)





J.11, serial 2528, of the 2nd Air Division. (Photo: Bo Widfeldt)

even against the British fighters, well trained and pugnacious, the Italian aircraft showed up well. The robustness and reliability of the C.R.42 was to stand it in good stead in the difficult terrain and weather conditions prevailing in Greece, and of the 156 days of the campaign only 64 were good enough for flying. The average number of fighters despatched per day was 125 and the victory/loss ratio in favour of the Italians was 160 to 29.

In May 1941 the Falco fighter units in the Aegean Isles co-operated effectively with German forces for the conquest of Crete. Number 162 Squadron based at Scarpanto and 163 Squadron at Godurra carried out escort missions with Ju 87 dive bombers, strafing Heraklion Air Base, embarkation harbours and land forces. In June 1941 the 161° GRUPPO was formed in the Aegean and it joined 162, 163 and 164 Squadrons with the C.R.42 as main equipment. The biplane remained in service with these units until November that year, when the Fiat G.50 entered service.

THE END IN ETHIOPIA

Following the easy victory in Ethiopia, now called Italian East Africa by the occupying forces, the efficiency of the Regia Aeronautica began to suffer through lack of supplies and reinforcement. Before joining in the main struggle with Germany against the Allies, the Italians found it fairly easy to get supplies to their forces by shipping them across the Mediterranean. But at the outbreak of hostilities the Royal Navy stopped this traffic and the Italians were forced to transport all war materials by air.

During the period immediately before June 1940 it had been possible to send to A.O.I. 36 of the new C.R.42s, enough to equip two Squadrons, 412 and 413. To offset losses and maintain a limited operational efficiency a series of long-distance, non-stop flights over the hostile territory of Egypt and the Sudan was initiated, the prime carrier being the three-engined SM.82 transport. Complete aircraft, dismantled, and spares were flown in, and from August 1940 until the Spring of 1941 a total of 51 Falcos was delivered in this manner, adding much needed strength to the Italian Fighter Forces.

But from June 1941 onwards the impossibility of continuing these flights became evident. They were made without the aid of radio facilities, in the rainy season and with the added risk of enemy interception. In addition, the task of finding the base after a flight of 2,500 miles was difficult. The SM.82s lifted a total load of 795,000 lb. and evacuated 1,500 Italians during 330 return trips. In November 1941 the two remaining C.R.42s were destroyed, one on the ground, the other during a sortie during which the last ammunition was expended. The following day an aircraft of the South African Air Force dropped a message on the Italian base that read "Homage to the pilot of the Fiat—he was a valiant fighter SAAF". The Italian Air Force was no longer a force to be reckoned with in Ethiopia.

Following the reconquest of Cyrenaica by Axis Forces in May 1941, the Italian fighter units equipped with C.R.42s and G.50s were joined by 374 Squadron with MC.200s and for the first time the Falco appeared as a fighter-bomber with 236 F.B. Squadron, carrying two 200 pound bombs on underwing racks. The obsolescent biplane found an immediate success in its new rôle, and it was responsible for the destruction of many armoured vehicles. As the result of experiments with the C.R.42 fighter-bomber the 5° STORMO ASSALTO (Attack), the 50° STORMO A (158° and 159° GRUPPI) and 15° STORMO A were equipped with the Falco. It was constantly in action during the alternate phases of advance and retreat on the North African front from Spring 1941 until November 1942, when the final Allied advance began at El Alamein.

Particularly active were Falco fighter-bombers in the Tobruk area, and even at night they were constantly strafing columns, camps, vehicles and air bases. Similar raids dotted the advance by Axis troops towards Alexandria, and in particular the Mersa Matruh area. In September 1942, when the Axis advance ground to a halt through lack of supplies, the C.R.42 equipped 50° STORMO A at Abu Nimeir (40 a/c), the 160° GRUPPO at Sorman, and the 101° GRUPPO A. The 15° STORMO A arrived from Italy to join these units and was thrown into hurried action during the Axis retreat that ended in Tripoli.

From 7th January to 19th the surviving 82 Falcos were repatriated to the homeland leaving behind them 3° STORMO (MC 202s) and 13° GRUPPO (MC 200s and 202s). On return to Italy the C.R.42s were then used for attacks on the Allied convoys between

Rare photograph of a two-seat trainer conversion of the C.R.42. Post-war codes Z-1 6 refer to First 'Zona Territoriale'—Milan Area. (Photo: Richard Ward)

Gibraltar and Malta, but the small bombs they carried were ineffective against the larger ships.

The C.R.42 was gradually superseded in day fighter units by more modern types, but it found a new lease of life as a night fighter. In this rôle it was equipped with radio, and with two searchlights installed in streamlined fairings under the lower wings. They were driven by a wind generator installed on the upper centre section. The first night fighter unit was formed in Sicily in October 1941 when 171° GRUPPO C.N. (Night-Fighters) came into being with two squadrons. The unit, however, did not see much action and was soon disbanded, but it did achieve a certain amount of success against the R.A.F. bombers attacking the industrial areas of Northern Italy in 1942/43. The C.R.42 Cassia Nocturnas were supplanted by Re 2001s and a small number of Me 110s and Do 217Js received from Germany. One mixed unit was 60° GRUPPO, based at Lonate Pozzol (Milan area) and Casselle (Turin), and had on strength 2 Me 110s, 10 Re 2001s, 7 Do 217Js and 6 C.R.42s.

EXPERIMENTAL VERSIONS

The C.R.42 configuration did not alter much during its career, and only two other versions appeared. One was the C.R.42bis with two additional 12.7 machine guns in underwing fairings and the fighter-bomber version. The C.R.42ter designation was incorrect and never adopted. Aircraft used in North Africa carried the suffix A.S. (Africa Settentrionale-North Africa) after the military serial to denote the introduction of a special oil and air sand filter and other modifications to permit use in the desert.

A small number of C.R.42s were fitted with two underwing 20mm. cannon in panniers.

In 1940 the CMASA company, a subsidiary of Fiat with factories at Marina di Pisa, constructed the prototype IC.R.42, a twin, float-plane version of the land fighter. Empty weight was 4,070 pounds and loaded weight 5,335 pounds, 273 pounds heavier than the land plane. Speed was decreased by only 5 m.p.h., but the marine version remained an experiment.

Another experimental Falco was fitted with a Daimler Benz DB601 in-line engine and had a designed speed of 323 m.p.h. The sole prototype was designated the C.R.42B. The installation of a retractable undercarriage was also considered, but it was clear that the Falco's basic design was unsuitable for such a modification.

A grand total of 1,781 C.R.42s had been constructed when production ceased late in 1942, and at the time of the Italian Armistice on 7th September 1943 only 113 remained. Sixty-four aircraft were serviceable and were distributed as follows:

I Squadra Aerea: 59 Gruppo Aut. Interc. 2 a/c; 60 Gruppo Aut. Interc. 2 a/c; 2 Gruppo Aut. Interc. 11 a/c.
II Squadra Aerea: none.
III Squadra Aerea: 15 Stormo 46-47 Gruppo 6 a/c;
Aeronautica della Sardegna: Sez. 160 Gruppo 2 a/c.
Aeronautica dell'Egeo: Sezione Interc. 3 a/c.
Aeronautica Albania: 392 Squadriglia Aut. 9 a/c.
Aeronautica Grecia: Sezione Interc. 3 a/c.
Avaizione Slovenia Dalmazia: 383 Squadriglia Aut. Ass. 13 a/c.
Aviazione Ausiliaria per la Marina: 1 Squadriglia FF.NN. 2 a/c. Total 53 Machines (11 unaccounted for).

At the time of the surrender four C.R.42s were flown to Allied lines to join the Co-Belligerent Force in Southern Italy, while the remainder served with the Repubblica Sociale Italiana in the North. The C.B. a/c served as trainers and some, modified as two-seaters, survived the war and were still in service in 1950.

FOREIGN FALCOS

Late in 1940 fifty C.R.42s were exported to Hungary and took part in the German-Russian campaign. It equipped the 2/11 Fighter Group of two squadrons and these, plus the 1/3 Fighter Squadron accompanied the Hungarian Army's Fast Corp from July to December 1941, being used mainly in the ground attack rôle.

Thirty-four Falcos were ordered by Belgium in September 1939, the first of which were delivered in March the following year. The C.R.42 equipped the 3eme Escadrille de Chasse and 13 of them were destroyed by Ju 87 dive bombers during the German invasion, the survivors taking little or no part in the air fighting over Belgium.

The largest export order for the C.R.42 was placed by Sweden and was for 72 a/c delivered between February 1940 and September 1941, bearing the serials 2501-2572. They were powered by Fiat A74R.1C.38

Wheel spats have been removed from this C.R.42, pictured near Milan in the early post-war years. (Photo: Richard Ward)

engines providing a maximum 870 h.p. The first dozen machines were flown to Sweden, but the remainder were crated and delivered to CVM (Centrala Fly Malm) and reassembled. By November 1941 all the Falcos were in service and they bore the designation of J 11. Modifications included 20mm. armour plate behind the pilot, radio equipment and skis for winter service.

The C.R.42 was declared obsolete in 1945 and the remaining a/c were purchased by AB Svensk Flytjanst and used for target towing duties. Swedish registrations of the C.R.42s (serials in brackets) ran as follows: SE-AOH (2503); SE-AON (2506); SE-AOR (2514); SE-AOI (2520); SE-AOL (2521); SE-AOM (2525); 2528, 2531, 2539, 2545 (SE-AOO, -AOS,-AOP,-AOW); SE-AOK (2548); SE-AOU (2563); SE-AOX (2569).

At the outbreak of war C.R.42 equipped the following units of the Italian Air Force.

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The Publishers acknowledge with grateful thanks the information and assistance so freely given by Captain Cesare Milani in the preparation of this PROFILE.

SPECIFICATION

(Data from Technical Manual C.A.446 of "Ministero dell" Aeronautica.)

Powerplant: One FIAT A.74R.1C.38, radial air cooled, fourteen cylinder, double row of 840 h.p. rated at 2,400 r.p.m./12,500 ft.—FIAT constant speed propeller, three blades, diameter 9.186 feet.

Dimension: Wing span (upper) 31.824 ft.; Wing span (lower) 21.325 ft; Length 27.067 ft.; Height 10.033 ft.; Wing area 241.111 sq. ft.

Weight (lb.): Empty 3929. Useful load 1130 of which: Pilot 176; Rounds 187 (400 each gun); Various 17; Fuel 672; Oil 77; Total loaded 5060.

Performance: (at 5,060 lbs. and 2,520 r.p.m.). Maximum speed: sea level 213 m.p.h.; 10,000 ft. 248 m.p.h.; 20,000 ft. 274 m.p.h. Landing speed: 80 m.p.h. Climb to: 3,000 ft. 1 min. 25 sec.; 10,000 ft. 4 min. 15 sec.; 20,000 ft. 9 min. Combat ceiling: 33,500 ft.; Takeoff run: 690 ft.; Landing run: 1,120 ft.; Range (20,000 ft. and 235 m.p.h.) 485 miles; Ultimate loading coefficient 14.

Armament: First series one 12.7 mm. (0.5") cal. and one 7.7 mm. (0.303") cal. machine-gun. Later two 12.7 mm. with 400 rounds each. Two additional 12.7 mm. machine-guns in underwing fairings on some. Racks for two 220 lb. bombs underwing.

Units of Regia Aeronautica with FIAT C.R.42 Fighter a/c.

(1) Usually the Italian "Stormo C.T." (C.T. stands for Caccia Terrestre—Land Fighters), was composed by two "Gruppi C.T."; each "Gruppo" by three "Squadriglie C.T.", with 12 a/c each Sq.

The total of 72 a/c was rarely if ever accomplished, especially on last stages of war. Often Gruppi and Squadriglie got autonomous status, independently of specific Stormo.

(2) At outbreak of war (10 June, 1940 for Italy), C.R.42 fighters equipped the following units.

Stormo	*Gruppo*	*Squadriglie*	*Location*
3°	18°	83°– 85°– 95°	Novi Ligure (Italy)
3°	23°		Cervere (Italy)
53°	150°	363°–364°–365°	Caselle (Italy)
53°	151°		Casabianca (Italy)
1°	17°		Palermo (Italy)
1°	157°		Trapani (Italy)
	13°		Castelbenito (Libya)
4°	10°	91°– 96°– 97°	Benina (Libya)
4°	9°	73°– 84°– 90°	Gorizia (Italy)
		411°–412°	A.O.I. (It. E. Africa)

Units identified after this date

363° Sq.–150° Gr.–53° St.–5 Nov., 1940–Tirana (Albania)
364° Sq.–150° Gr.–53° St.–5 Nov., 1940–Valona (Albania)
365° Sq.–150° Gr.–53° St.–5 Nov., 1940–Argirocastro
162° Sq.–161° Gr. –6 June, 1941–Aegean Isles
163° Sq.–161° Gr. –6 June, 1941–Aegean Isles
164° Sq.–161° Gr. –6 June, 1941–Aegean Isles
392° Sq. –7 Sept., 1943–Tirana (Albania)
– 3° Gr. –9 Dec., 1940–Monserrato (Sardinia)
73° Sq., 84° Sq., 90° Sq. } 9° Gr.– 4° St.–1 July, 1940–Libya
83° Sq., 85° Sq., 95° Sq. } 18° Gr.–56° St.–10 Sept., 1940–Maldegen (Belgium)
– 23° Gr.– 3° St.–12 Dec., 1940–Sorman (Libya)
– 60° Gr. –July 1942–Lonate P. (Italy)
– 97° Gr. –July 1943–Crotone (Italy)
–151° Gr.–53° St.–April 1941–Libya
–153° Gr.–54° St.–April 1941–Grottaglie (Italy)
–154° Gr. –July 1943–Rhodes (Aegean)
–156° Gr. –Jan. 1941–Sicily (Italy)
–157° Gr.– 1° St.–Sept. 1941–Caselle (Italy)
–160° Gr. –April 1941–Tirana (Albania)
–160° Gr. –Dec. 1941–Sorman (Libya)
–160° Gr. –Sept. 1943–Ajaccio (Corsica)
300° Sq.–171° Gr. –Oct. 1941–Sicily (Italy)–Night Fighter Unit

The C.R.42 was used by many "Assalto" (Attack) units, with underwing bombs. Examples:

15° St. A.–El Alamein Area–Summer 1942
383° Sq. A.–Zara (Yugoslavia)–July 1943
236° Sq. A.–Ara Fileni (Libya)–Jan. 1942
50° St. A.–158° and 159° Gr. A.–Bengasi (Libya)–Spring 1942
3° Gr. A.–Martuba (Libya)–Spring 1942
101° Gr. A.–El Alamein Area–Fall 1942
5° St. A.–101° Gr. A.–El Nofilia (Libya)–Nov. 1942
15° St. A.–Sorman (Libya)–Nov. 1942

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C.R.42 Falco, 95 Squadriglia Caccia Terrestre, 18 Gruppo C.T., 56 Stormo C.T., Corpo Aereo Italiano, Maldegen, Belgium, 1940. Also designated 18/JG56.

95 Squadriglia

C.R.42 Falco, 412 Squadriglia C.T., Gura, Eritrea and Addis Ababa, Abyssinia, 1940-41

162 Squadriglia,

Venetian dialect motto, 'Beware, I Will Scratch You'

C.R.42 Falco, 162 Squadriglia C.T., 161 Gruppo C.T., Aegean Isles, 1940 →

97 Squadriglia

4 Stormo, 'Cavallino Rampante

C.R.42 Falco, 97 Squadriglia C.T., ↑ 9 Gruppo C.T., 4 Stormo C.T., Benina, Libya 1940

Fasces fuselage insignia

Coat of Arms of the House of Savoia, rudder insignia

↑ C.R.42 Falco, 383 Squadriglia Assalto, Zara, Yugoslavia, 1943

← C.R.42 Falco, 1/4 Fighter Squadron, Hungarian Air Force

1/4 Fighter Squadron, 'St. George'

Stbd. side showing Flottilj number position

J 11, Flottilj E.9, 3rd Division, Save, Göteborg Royal Swedish Air Force

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